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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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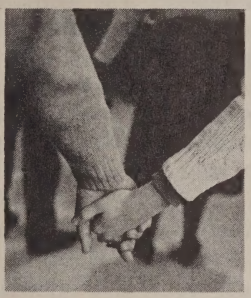
An understanding between neighbors is essential if there is to be an understanding between nations.

Carl A. Evans



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Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship In Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

EDITORIAL

WAITING AND WATCHING

We are in God's hands, but we are not obliged to carry the world on our shoulders. The world, and we its inhabitants, are sustained not by our own wills, but by a Divine love and wisdom that flow through us with warmth and light and energy.

This infusion of the world with Light can be experienced, but never completely understood, and that's the catch. We aren't satisfied with experience. We're proud enough to want to understand, to comprehend, and to reduce to words.

We want security. We want control. We want to run our lives the way we flip from channel to channel on TV, pursuing fantasies of fear and mastery.

It doesn't work. We can no more control God or reality, or bind them to our words and tiny wills than we can control our own curiosity or that of our children.

We can pretend of course, and we do, with inward confusions that become increasingly difficult for us to ignore.

An alternative exists. We may, if we chose, pay attention to what is real and ultimately inescapable. There is comfort in being consciously present in our lives; it is the comfort of walking and waiting with God.

When we are ready to receive God's comfort, things begin to change. Stale lives develop in unanticipated ways. Things start to rustle and bloom in the corners of our grim and predictable lives. We are made free to notice what goes on around us. Things come alive. There are surprises and gifts we did not anticipate. Since we know we are not responsible for their presence, and since we can not pretend we saw them coming, we become able to see more of them. We feel the first stirrings of new life within ourselves.

Then we are God's hands, if we allow ourselves to be. In this world, there is an inverse ratio of the spirit: the more we put our lives, our fears, and our uncertainties in God's hands and relax – suspending our judgements and opening our eyes – the more we see and feel and know of the Divine love and of the incredible wonders of creation. The more we put ourselves in God's hands and the more we pray to do so, the more our lives will open up to God and, not incidentally, to those around us. We know this from experience, and in this experience we know that we are by no means unique.

The word unique stirs further questions, which are variations on the problem "Shouldn't I be in control here? Am I chosen? Am I unique, or am I just peculiar?"

Pondering our peculiarities, our specialness, our unique talents for this or that great cause, is an exercise best suspended in favor of a returning of attention to God. We have the ability to put away thoughts of peculiar talents and get back, through God, to the realities of our work and life. Dwelling on

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NEWS OF THE FELLOWSHIP

MISS BROWN REPORTS ON HER TRIP TO CHINA

My long time dream to be able to take a trip to China was fulfilled this past year. I was invited by a native-born Chinese friend of many years to join her Music Tour in June. We toured China from Beijing to Canton visiting eight major cities: Beijing, Xian, Nanjing, Fuzhou, Hangzhou, Shanghai, Guilin, and Guangzhou before leaving for Hong Kong.

Since this was a professional Music Tour we visited noted music schools and conservatories, and there was little time to visit churches and other religious institutions. However, as one travels through China, it would appear that religious freedom is being revived. I was informed by our National Guide that more and more churches are reopening after being closed by the Cultural Revolution, and that more and more Chinese are participating in public worship as well as in small private groups at home and elsewhere. We did visit two or three Mosques and Temples, and observed some indication of prayer.

In touring China one can truly learn from the Chinese people by observing the goodness in the common courtesy, the kindness, the generosity, and the cordiality of the people. And it is apparent that religion in China exists as the "realm of human values" and that perhaps there, more than anywhere else, the people live their religion.

Kathryn G. Brown

FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES FEB. – MARCH '84

The Fellowship will sponsor three meetings this winter for worship and discussion. Admission is free but reservations are required. Meetings will be held at the Fellowship office 134 Franklin Corner Rd., Lawrenceville, N.J. on Sat. evenings between 7-9 PM. Meetings will begin with a short period of silent worship, and move to an informal consideration of the participants thoughts and experiences on the matter at hand. Meetings will be chaired by a member of the Fellowship staff.

Topics will include:

Feb. 25 - Self-Centeredness and Surrender; a practical consideration of the Tao Teh Ching

Mar. 10 - Inspiration, Evolution, and the Gifts of the Spirit

Mar. 31 - "Doing Unto Others" Prisons and the Causes of Violence

All are welcome, be sure to call ahead to confirm a place. (609) 896-3636

* * * * *

Readers are encouraged to reflect on their experiences of guilt and forgiveness, and to share a few words with us for inclusion in our coming issues.

E.M.

WORDS OF WISDOM

"I now make it my earnest prayer that God. . .would graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with charity and humility, and a pacific temper of mind, which were characteristics of the Divine author of our blessed religion, and without an humble imitation of Whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation."

GEORGE WASHINGTON
Letter to the Governors, June 8, 1783

"More importantly, he reveals himself as a man unusually well trained in the habit of prayer, by which I mean the habit of listening. The petitionary aspect of prayer is its most trivial because it is involuntary. We cannot help asking that our wishes may be granted, though all too many of them are like wishing that two and two may make five, and cannot and should not be granted. But the serious part of prayer begins when we have got our begging over with and listen for the Voice of what I would call the Holy Spirit, though if others prefer to say the Voice of Oz or the Dreamer or Conscience, I shan't quarrel, so long as they con't call it the Voice of the Super-Ego, for that 'entity' can only tell us what we know already, whereas the Voice I am talking about always says something new and unpredictable – an unexpected demand, obedience to which involves a change of self, however painful."

W. H. Auden, New Yorker, *Feb 21, 1970.*

If there is such a phenomenon as absolute evil, it consists in treating another human being as a thing.

John Brunner

"There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath different names. It is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren, in the best sense of the expression."

John Woolman

Monastery Without Walls:

An Approach to the Contemplative Life

The mystery of life surrounds us on all sides. Human life is full of suffering, and of beauty, of frustration, injury and injustice, and of aspiration for the infinite What kind of beings are we? How can we escape our frustrations and sufferings, and fulfill our aspirations? Sages from all cultures and ages have told us to look within, that the Ultimate Satisfaction (by whatever name they have called it) is to be found somehow within ourselves.

This "looking within" is contemplation. It is the most important thing we can do. Even if we say that the plea for the removal of moral evil and human suffering calls to us with a voice that cannot be ignored, still this turning within is the most useful, the most practical, the most helpful thing we can do. For in this way we will discover the root of suffering, the secret of its cessation, and how it is replaced by a joy that nothing can take from us.

If we are in search of peace and truth and eternal life, and if we have compassion on the multitudes who are wandering without direction, seeking to assuage their hurts and longings, then let us not only do what we can materially and emotionally to ease one another's pain, but let us practice contemplation as the best means in the long term of finding a real solution.

Schola Contemplationis is, as its name suggests, a school of contemplation. It is concerned with learning and teaching. But not in the sense of merely acquiring information or skill. Its goal is the actual practice and full life of contemplation, which implies a relation to the highest or Ultimate Reality and the Whole of Existence, a relation which includes both knowing and valuing.

We people of the late twentieth century, perhaps especially we Americans at the crossroads of the Earth, in the melting pot of human cultures, are the heirs of all the great spiritual traditions of the last five thousand years. And each of us is still a questing spirit. As such, each of us must inquire of Reality what it is, what we ourselves are, what are our goal and destiny, and by what means we are to procced. When we inquire about these matters, we can draw on the riches of all those great traditions whose descendants we are, for what they have to reveal may speak to our questions. Also, we will inevitably consult our own experience, and our own genius will make its contribution to the ongoing tradition of revelations.

Traditionally, people who felt called to devote themselves to contemplation have undertaken special lifestyles for this purpose.

They have lived in monasteries or ashrams or hermitages, or they have wandered about homeless. This can still be done. But there are also people among us now who, while they feel the call to contemplation, cannot adopt one of these traditional lifestyles. They may have families they cannot rightly leave; they may not find a monastery or ashram that suits them; their health may not permit, or their temperament may not accommodate wandering or extreme solitude. They may believe that they should remain in their work which is valuable both to their personal development and to the common life of the world. They may not align themselves so thoroughly with any one

particular spiritual tradition as to be able to embrace it and its practices exclusively.

At *Schola Contemplationis* we are trying to provide for these people, the ones who are not otherwise provided for. We hope to offer resources to help each contemplative reach what that contemplative wishes to reach. We are not intentionally restricted to any particular tradition, although we will be limited by our ignorance at any particular moment as we proceed with our learning. By intention, each of us is encouraged to follow the way that best suits our mind and temperament, our background and physical capacity, the way that really draws us and works for us. Thus, all sorts of materials are provided, various paths of discipline are investigated, taught, practiced. No particular allegiance is expected. It *is* expected that respect be shown for the convictions and predilections of others.

It is important that this be understood not as dilettantism or lack of commitment, but as a new kind of integrity, a sense of oneness and wholeness on a new level, commensurate with our sense of belonging to the whole Earth and the whole human race, rather than to some particular locality and ethnic group. What unifies the vision and the practice of any given contemplative is found in the life of that contemplative. That life is not a patchwork or a flitting about from one path to another. It is a single vital act in its own right, in which the heredity of a multitude of ancestors comes to realization.

The *Schola,* then, exists to serve the individuals, not to require the individuals to conform to it. Nevertheless, it has a community aspect, founded on the bond of common search and shared joy. Also, this association itself is one of the "resources" the *Schola* offers, for the companionship of like-minded people is one of the best helps one can have on the way. Associates are encouraged to support one another by nourishing each individual on the path that individual is taking. This works best when each one is more concerned to sustain the others than to seek sustenance from them.

Other resources include a library of books, journals, tapes, manuscripts, visual materials representing spiritual traditions of the world and the contemporary sciences, as well as history, literature, and art. Teachers will be available trained in various practices, familiar with different philosophies and theologies and with arts and sciences. Study is important, but practice is even more important. How to practice – in a way suitable for that particular practitioner – is what we hope to help each one find.

Doctors Beatrice Bruteau and James Somerville lecture widely and hold workshops on the practice of prayer and contemplation for groups as diverse as the Vedanta Society and the Trappist monks of the Abbey at Gethsemane. For further information on the SCHOLA CONTEMPLATIONIS write to Box 11144, Bethabara Station, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27116.

Testimony of the Dove

Peace and the Christian Charismatics

My Christian life has been profoundly affected by two movements within the church: the one, peace and disarmament; the other charismatic renewal. But sadly I have found little significant relationship between the two but rather even alienation. Charismatic renewal tends to be coopted by reactionary politics and militarism; the peace movement tends to be political and not spiritual. As both a charismatic and a pacifist, I have experienced a type of Christian schizophrenia. However, in prayer one day the Lord revealed to me that the symbol for both the peace and charismatic movements was the dove; that at the deepest level these two movements are one; and that the schizophrenia is not within God nor within me, but sadly within my church.

I deeply believe that both movements profoundly need one another; the charismatic renewal needs the peace movement to historicize its spiritual power. The peace movement needs spiritual energy and gifts to offer a real alternative to the use of weapons to combat evil. It is no coincidence in the heart and mind of God that the human race stands at the edge confronting the possibilities of total death while across the face of this planet in a way not seen since the apostolic age there are extraordinary signs and wonders of the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal revival of this century has moved from small groups of ostracized "Holy Rollers" into every mainline denomination including most rapidly the Roman church; it is the fastest growing part of the church in the Third World and the main signs of vital life in the church in the First and Second World. Within the movement there is a rediscovery of the primitive apostolic experience of the Holy Spirit, of Resurrection power; healing, visions, prophecy, glossalalia, exorcisms are suddenly becoming normative phenomena for millions of Christians. Worship has found new dynamism. Faith has become truly not a blind leap into wish fulfillment but "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

At the same time, war has revealed its uselessness to the human race. It is not the necessary evil of moral reasoning anymore; it is stark evil. The yearning for peace pulsates throughout the nations, and yet we seem unable to stop the madness and the pathetic lemming drivenness to suicide. Could it be in the Pentecostal movement that we have the key to the power to combat evil but with non-violent love? Could it be God himself peering out from the nucleus of the atom warning and begging us to risk another power as revealed in the cross? For if this universe has any moral sanity in it, then there must be some option for human struggle other than war. Martin Luther King Jr. has written: "The choice today is no longer between violence and non-violence. It is either non-violence or nonexistence."

Christian Pacifism has often been confused with "passivism"; that is a total lack of response to enemy aggression or to the evil within the human social and political arena. But pacifism is an active peace making, the doing of justice, the destruction of evil but not with the sword, and certainly not with nuclear weapons, but with the power of prayer, of faith, of non-retaliation, of

love, of – at its source – the Holy Spirit. That was the way of Jesus; that was the way of the early church. John Stoner of the Mennonite Central Committee has written:

> *"For 300 years the Christian movement repudiated the use of the sword, declaring that its power resided in prayer, faith and the Spirit of God. Those were years of miraculous growth for the church. The blood of the martyrs was indeed the seed of the church. The cross of Jesus defined the life of the disciples and the power of the resurrection was turned loose all around. . .The energies of the Christian nuclear resistance movement should be channelled toward the release of the spiritual power which is latent in the church through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The power which must replace bombs and missiles is spiritual power, the power of the Holy Spirit."*

In the charismatic renewal, I have seen intimations of just such power. I have seen crippled bodies miraculously healed; I have seen minds indwelt with demonic forces delivered; I have experienced the presence of God awesomely in prayer, praise and ministry. I have seen the power of prayer and fasting to bring reconciliation. If only this worldwide movement could expand its spiritual and political horizons. . .The first Pentecost was given by God above all for unity and power; so this "later rain" of the Spirit I believe is a gift from God. Would that every "charismatic" become a peace activist and every peace activist a charismatic; would that the true depth of unity of these movements become consciously realized. Then again, as in the day of Noah, the dove would be the sign of new hope and a new beginning for the human experiment.

Jürgen W. Liias is rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Malden, Massachusetts.

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All the Scriptures emphasize the need for believers to be of one heart and one mind. Often they stop there. Or there is an emphasis upon being of one heart and one mind expressed by some cult or school which leads to the philosophical recognition of this kind of unity. The great problem is how to manifest this in everyday life. And it happens sometimes that an institution like universal military training does more to link man to man than religion and education and moral instruction. Why? Because only too often the religion and education and moral instruction end in philosophy and do not partake of the detailed, practical existence.

Murshid Samuel Lewis
Introduction to Spiritual Brotherhood

Gandhi Speaks

Gandhi spoke to the people further: "To me God is Truth and Love; God is ethics and morality; God is fearlessness; God is the source of Light and life, and yet He is above and beyond all these. God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist. For in His boundless heart God permits the atheist to live. He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word, for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and others unknowingly.

"God is personal to those who need His personal presence. He is embodied to those who need His touch. He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us. . . .

"God cannot cease to be because hideous immoralities or inhuman brutalities are committed in His name. He is long-suffering. He is patient, but He is also terrible. He is the most exacting personage in this world and the world to come. He metes out the same measure to us that we mete out to our neighbours—men and brutes. With Him ignorance is no excuse. And withal He is ever-forgiving, for He always gives us the chance to repent. He is the greatest Democrat the world knows, for He leaves us unfettered to make our own choice between evil and good. He is the greatest Tyrant ever known, for He often dashes the cup from our lips and under cover of free will leaves us a margin so wholly inadequate as to provide only mirth for Himself at our expense. . . .

"Relief will come only when there is the least hope of it. For such is the way of that cruelly kind Deity who insists upon testing his devotees through a fiery furnace and delights in humbling them to the dust.

"Worship and prayer, therefore, are not to be performed with the lips but with the heart. That is why they can be performed equally by the dumb and the stammerer, by the ignorant and the stupid; and the prayers of those whose tongues are nectared, but whose hearts are full of poison, are never heard."

From Great Soul, *1948*

continued from page 1

our capabilities and achievements is futile; it is a sure way to cut ourselves off from God, from our real talents, and from everyone else. Such self-centeredness is the entrance to a hall of mirrors where desperation reflects back upon itself, flourishes, and blossoms into confusion and despair.

How special am I? God alone knows. There is nothing special in being unique. Every human being is.

We can put such questions in the care of the Divine and relax. We'll be shown more about ourselves and others than we could ever hope to guess or figure. The longer we practice waiting, watching, trusting, and remembering to remember where we really are, the more of the miracle of life we'll see, and the more good we'll allow ourselves to accomplish.

E.M.

PRESENCE

Thank you
for hearing me
now that I've dared
to ask, trusting you,
and for letting me feel
your presence, your
strength with
me.

And in all
those other times
I never even asked,
thank you for staying here,
waiting out the loneliness
with me, I not even
knowing you are
near.

Emily Councilman

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CLAY

Clay: yielded
(I believe in the potter)

Clay: surrendered
(I trust in his hands)

Clay needs to be molded;
needs the wheel for its molding,
needs hands for its shaping.

Clay gives only itself,
yields itself to the potter.

Not the potter,
not the wheel,
just the clay,
yielded.

Joanna M. Weston

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